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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Tuesday, April 4, 1939

(For Broadcast Use Only)

SUBJECT: "GARDEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S.D.A.

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Come out of the kitchen, homemakers. Come out of the kitchen and out of the house, too, because all the questions in this week's mailbag are about the garden.

The first is from one of those smart and thrifty homemakers who is planning a garden to supply fresh vegetables for the summer and canned vegetables for next winter and incidentally good health and good meals for her family the year around.

She writes: "How large a garden does a family of 3 children and 2 adults need? We want vegetables for the table all summer and enough extra to can and dry and store in the fall."

Answer: W.R. Beattie, garden specialist of the Department of Agriculture, says that about half an acre of land will provide for all of the more intensive vegetable crops and give a fair surplus for canning but it probably won't be enough for sweet corn, potatoes, pumpkin and squash. Of course, the size garden you need depends partly on how you work it and partly on where you live. Up in New England where winters are long and a good deal of food must be raised for canning, you probably need a larger garden than in parts of the South where you can have something growing in the garden most of the year.

The more carefully you plan and care for your garden, the more profitable it will be, Mr. Beattie advises. Draw a plan of your garden and group the small-growing and quick-maturing crops on one side and the large-growing and slow-maturing kinds on the other side. Make allowances for second plantings and start

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your garden early.

Spinach, peas, beets, carrots, radishes and lettuce can usually go in as soon as the ground can be worked. Then warm season crops like snap beans, sweet corn and squash can go in as soon as the weather is favorable.

About second plantings, good gardeners now usually plant a second crop of snap beans, sweet corn, beets, carrots and lettuce to lengthen their season and provide good-quality vegetables in the fall for storage. You can plant snap beans, both green and wax, every 2 or 3 weeks up to about 2 months before the fall frost is expected. If you like your beets and carrots small and tender, you can also plant these vegetables 2 or 3 times during the season so you will always have some young and tender ones for table use. Lettuce is often neglected after its first early planting. But many times it is wise to plant lettuce several times during the summer. Nowadays you have your choice of early, late and mid-season varieties of many garden vegetables. So you can have a variety of fresh vegetables on the dinner table all season if you plan well.

By the way, many of your vegetable garden questions are answered in Mr. Beattie's bulletin called "Subsistence Farm Gardens." A copy of this will be sent to you free if you send your name and address to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Ask for "Subsistence Farm Gardens" Farmers' Bulletin No. 1746.

Now here's a question about using wash water on the garden. A housewife writes: "I have heard that soapy wash water from the washing machine is helpful to the garden. Is this true?"

Answer: No, wash water is more likely to harm then help your garden. It ordinarily contains a good deal of soap which is quite alkaline. The danger is that the soil may become so sweet or alkaline that it no longer favors the growth of plants. Also, if the soap is strong and the soil rather dry when the wash water goes on, it may injure the roots."

The third question up for answer today comes from a city gardener. She writes: "Our city water supply is chlorinated. I have been wondering whether the chlorine in the water is harmful to my garden or house plants."

Answer: Experiments to find out whether chlorine in city and town water supplies is harmful to plants have indicated that the small amount used does no damage. Only when so much chlorine is used that the water is unfit to drink does it show a harmful effect on plants. Chlorinated water should not be used for watering azaleas or gardenias.

Question Number 4: "Will you advise me as to the best location for a permanent vegetable garden on my farm?"

Answer: That word "permanent" is a good word to use in connection with a home vegetable garden. Here's one place where the experts don't advise much in the way of crop rotation. They say to select a permanent site for the garden near the house, so the housewife does not have to go to a distant field to pull a bunch of beets or pick enough lettuce for salad. Gathering vegetables from the garden is an everyday affair. Vegetables, particularly peas, sweet corn, snap beans and lima beans must be fresh if they are to keep their fine flavor and the vitamins Nature gave them. Another reason for having the garden near the house is that thieves and stray animals may otherwise beat the family to a good crop. A permanent garden should be fenced to keep out animals. In general a southern or southeastern exposure is best for the garden. Avoid ground that is so low that there is danger of overflow in wet seasons. Also be sure the garden site has good drainage because wet soils are usually unproductive and can't be worked in the spring. Sandy loams and light clay loams are considered best for growing vegetables.

Once more, remember that bulletin called "Subsistence Farm Gardens." It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1746 and you can order it from the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. as long as the free supply lasts.

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